

Thank You for Not Smoking by JBear

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Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper

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Summary:

“Chief Hopper is basically like... your Dad, doesn't that freak you out?”

It was the first time Hopper had ever been put into context to El as anything other than her friend. Was he her Dad? As with most questions she didn't know the answer to, she'd have to ask Hopper.

Or, Jim stumbles into the right moment to present El with her birth certificate.

Thank You for Not Smoking

Author's Note:

Thank you to everyone who is reading this, my first ST fic! This may turn into a series of (related or not, who knows) one-shots. I have a few ideas, most of which revolve around Jopper and Hopper&El and Hopper/Byers family cuteness because I just can't help my damn self.

“Hey Kid,” Hopper began, poking his head inside El’s bedroom where she and her friends were all sitting on the floor in a circle around a long forgotten about gameboard of Shoots and Ladders.

“Five more minutes. Joyce is here to take the boys home, OK?”

“Yes” she replied with a slight nod of her head, then looked down to the blue watch wrapped around her wrist that was one of her Christmas gifts from him, the shade of blue nearly an exact match to Sara’s bracelet he had given her a few weeks earlier the night of the Snow Ball.

“Eight-fifteen” she acknowledged with a sigh, remembering the time Hopper had told her earlier in the day that they were allowed to stay over until. She could see Joyce hovering behind Hopper, offering a small wave and a smile towards El, and then Will.

“That’s right. How’s about you guys get this mess cleaned up, huh? We’ll just be outside”

A muttering of “yes sir”’s echoed around the room from the group of boys, most of them still uncomfortable in his presence, like they were over to play at the School Principal’s house or something. Still, they were glad that they got to spend time with El, even if it was under Hopper’s strict conditions and that either himself, Joyce or Jonathan were the only ones allowed to escort them to and from the cabin. They also had to lie to their parents about where they were, but that wasn’t exactly a stretch for any of them given the last 2 years of their lives they were used to lying to cover up their friendship

with, or even the existence of, El.

Hopper and Joyce walked away and a moment later the kids could hear the front door of the cabin open and close, signalling the pair of adults going outside likely to share a cigarette as they usually did together; Hopper recently making the effort to stop smoking inside the house for El's benefit.

"Dude, that's still so weird" Dustin began, giving his head a shake and El only gave him a look of confusion in return.

"Chief Hopper is basically like... your *Dad*, doesn't that freak you out?" Lucas chimed in.

"Shit would terrify me" Dustin continued with a shake of his head and El's eyes widened slightly in alarm, knowing if Hopper heard him cursing he'd be in for a world of trouble but when a couple seconds passed and no yelling from outside ensued, she relaxed, realizing they couldn't hear them from out there.

"I don't know, I think it's kinda cool. He's always been really good to me" Will supplied a moment later with a shrug of his shoulders. "And my family" he added as an afterthought.

"Yeah, that's because he's trying to be *your* Dad too" Dustin quickly replied, adding his infamous purr noise and wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

"Oh my God, *shut up*" Will groaned, reaching across the circle to shove Dustin's shoulder. "You don't know what you're talking about"

"Uh, hello, I have eyes you know, Will. So does everybody else in town. Apparently the only two blind people in this whole scenario are your Mom and Hopper" he added with a laugh which Lucas and Mike immediately joined in on while El just looked between all her friends with confusion etched across her features. She didn't understand what was funny, or why being *her* dad (and, was he?) would somehow also make him Will's. She turned to Mike and when he caught her gaze he quit laughing and reached for her hand, giving her fingers a slight squeeze.

"They're just joking around, it's OK" he said in way of explanation, but it didn't lessen her confusion any. Still, she kept silent and just nodded as if she understood. She made a mental note to ask Hopper about it later.

They spent the last couple minutes they had together cleaning up the toys strewn throughout the room and making plans for what they would do on their next visit a month from now, El already mentally calculating down the days until she could see Mike again. She was grateful at least that she got to spend time with Will a little more frequently. Joyce would occasionally stop by with clothes for El, or pre-made dinners for the pair of them that they just had to heat up in the oven and Will almost always tagged along so they would get a few minutes to hang out together while Joyce and Hopper would sit and have a coffee or a cigarette; usually both. El liked that her and Hopper both got some company besides each other once and a while, not to mention how much Joyce seemed to adore her filled El with a warmth she could carry with her for days on end until the next visit.

Hopper seemed to enjoy their visits a lot as well, as far as El could tell. She and Will would constantly hear the two of them laughing or teasing one another, particularly when they would reminisce about old memories they shared together. Both El and Will found it fascinating on the rare occasions that they would share these stories with them; the thought alone of how these two adults were once their age and just running around doing stupid things together with their friends as they did now was a constant source of amusement for the two youngsters.

Not only would they spend time at the cabin, but Hopper often found himself over at the Byers' household as well, which El was always slightly jealous of, not being allowed to leave the cabin as of yet. He would occasionally be late getting home from work, signalling to her that he had to stop by the Byers house, usually to fix something or other. Or, if a large snowfall came throughout the night he would always get up extra early to head over there to drive Joyce to work and the boys to school sating that she had no business driving "*that deathtrap on wheels she calls a car*" in this weather. He could pretend to be grumpy and put-out and grumble at mother nature those early mornings all he wanted, but El knew better. Taking care of others

seemed to give him purpose, and she could tell it brought him happiness.

...

Later that night found El and Hopper lounging on the couch in front of the TV. Despite her adamant begging for Hopper to rent *A Nightmare on Elm Street* for them to watch, they had instead compromised on *Gremlins*, which, he had assured her, "*was not for babies*".

"*Halfway happy?*" Hopper had remarked when he had returned home from work earlier that day and pulled the VHS tape out of the shopping bag, handing it to her and she offered a smirk in return.

"*Halfway happy*" she had agreed with a shrug.

Now as the end credits rolled across the screen, El looked to the opposite end of the couch where Hopper was sitting, propped up with his elbow resting on the arm of the couch while El's feet rested in his lap allowing her to stretch out, the both of them apparently decidedly too lazy to move despite the fact that the movie had come to an end.

"Dad," she said aloud, almost as if she was feeling out the sound of the word, but it was barely audible over the sound from the television.

"What?" Came Hopper's response after a few seconds had passed.

"Dad." She said again, this time a little louder.

"Lucas and Mike have Dad's..." she began cautiously, her brow furrowed slightly as if she was talking her way through a problem.

"Dustin doesn't" she added after a moment, shaking her head. "Will has a Dad but he's..." she paused, unsure how to finish that sentence.

"A real piece of work" Hopper grumbled, mostly to himself.

"Mouth-breather" El shrugged and Hopper chuckled.

"Yeah. What's this about, kid?" He wondered.

“Lucas and Dustin said that you...” she paused, thinking about how she wanted to phrase it before she just decided to come out with it point blank.

“Are you... my Dad?”

“Oh....” Was all Hopper’s tired brain could come up with in response. He probably should’ve expected this. In fact, he probably should’ve invited this conversation to start weeks ago while that birth certificate continued to burn a hole into his jacket pocket, but he hadn’t.

He had thought about it. Several times, in fact. The day he got it, but decided he needed time to work out in his head how he would explain it all to El. The night of the Snow Ball, but then he didn’t want anything to potentially ruin her excitement for the fun evening she had planned; didn’t need her head swimming with thoughts of anything other than having a fun night out with her friends. Then he’d had the idea of giving it to her as a Christmas gift but thought better of it, thinking it shouldn’t really be considered a ‘gift’ he’s giving her. Hell if anything she was a gift to him, and he didn’t want her to feel like becoming a family was something she got as a present for being a good kid. Every kid deserves a family, it’s not something you should have to earn.

So here he was, a few weeks into the new year now and he still hadn’t told her about it.

If ever there was a right time, he thought inwardly.

“One second,” Hopper started, lifting El’s feet off his lap so he could stand, he walked over to the coat rack by the door and slipped his hand into the inside pocket to pull out the white envelope he had been giving nearly two months ago.

El watched him with a quizzical stare as he pulled the envelope from his jacket and walked back over to the couch. She moved her legs, sitting up and bringing them underneath her so Hopper could take a seat next to her.

“I uh... got this from Doc Owens” he said in way of explanation,

handing her the envelope which she took carefully with both hands.

Reaching inside she pulled the document out and ran her index finger across the wording, her eyes following along with her finger as she read to herself in silence.

Name: Jane Hopper

Was born in: Hawkins, Indiana

Child of: Teresa Ives and James Hopper

“It’s so that... you can keep staying here. With me. If that’s... If that’s what you want” Jim added, uncertainty laced in his tone as he watched her still staring at the small piece of paper that would bind their lives together indefinitely.

El continued staring at it for a long moment before finally slipping it carefully back inside the envelope and bringing her gaze up to reach his.

“Yes” she stated simply, a smile pulling at her the corners of her mouth as she nodded her head at him.

Jim couldn’t hold back the grin that spread across his face. “Me too, kid. Me too”

“So... *Dad*” El acknowledged it as a question once more and Hopper nodded his head.

“Yeah, I guess... yeah. Dad.”

She smiled but it vanished almost immediately as she tilted her head to the side in thought and he instantly felt a flash of panic rise through him, hoping he hadn’t pushed something on her she didn’t want.

“Do you have to call me Jane?” she questioned and Hopper immediately barked out a laugh in response.

“No. I mean, legally, yeah, I guess you’ll go by Jane, but we can tell everyone that Eleven is your nickname and you like to be called El. If

anyone asks, just... say your Dad is a big Spinal Tap fan or somthin” he added as a joke and she just crinkled her face in confusion, the reference going over her head.

“Nevermind,” he said, shaking his head slightly before reaching his arm out and she quickly leaned into his side so he could wrap it around her and brought his face down to kiss the top of her head.

“I love ya, kid” he said after a moment and he could feel El’s grasp around his middle tighten in response.

“I love you, Dad” she mumbled into his chest and Hopper could swear his heart may have very well exploded in that moment.

“Dad?” El began a few short seconds later, lifting her head slightly so she could look at him.

“Yeah?”

“Why does Dustin say you want to be Will’s Dad too?”

“Oh for Christ’s sake” Hopper immediately groaned, dropping his head back to the back of the couch and staring up at the ceiling.

He immediately regretted agreeing to the “no smoking in the house” rule, because he could really use a damned cigarette right about now.

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading. Feel free to send me prompts if you liked this piece and want to see more! And of course, I'd love to hear from you in the comments section.